



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

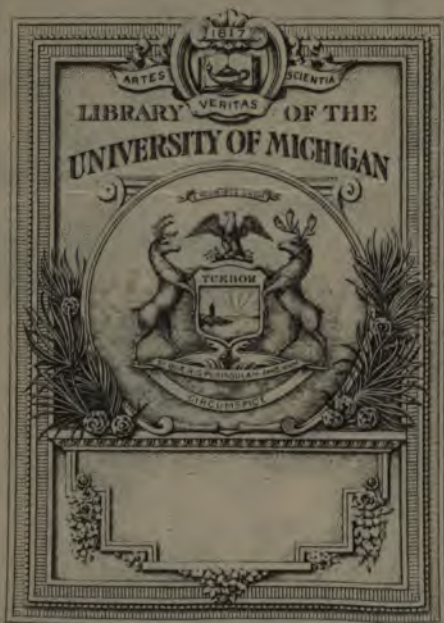
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



BEVAN

HT

103

B5

THE
MORAL INFLUENCE
OF
SLAVERY.

THE SUBSTANCE OF A PAPER PRESENTED
TO
THE ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION,
HELD IN LONDON, JUNE, 1840,
BY
WILLIAM BEVAN.

LONDON :
THOMAS WARD AND CO.,
27, PATERNOSTER ROW ;
AND MAY BE HAD AT THE OFFICE OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN
ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY, 27, NEW BROAD STREET.

1840.

HT

1033

.657

THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF SLAVERY.

THE success of unrighteous schemes opens abundant sources of moral injury. They contain within themselves the elements of re-active retribution. The perpetrator and the victim of injustice alike suffer. Such are the results of the system of slavery ;—results which find their origin in no contingent or occasional circumstances, but which arise from the essential and invariable principles on which the system is based.

I.—The man-stealer, the man-seller, the man-buyer, rests under the malediction of Jehovah. He breathes a polluted air. He struggles against an ever-present invisible agency, which his own sin has called into being. The curse is in the field ;—the labour he exacts is less productive, the capital he invests is less secure, than that which stands free from the prohibited traffic. The curse is on his soul ;—a blight settles on his personal character, his social affections, his domestic circle, his religious fellowship.

1. The tendency of the system is opposed to that sense of justice, the preservation of which is the safeguard of individual integrity and social order. Before enslaving men, it denies to them the attributes of humanity. It permits not their claim to intellectual and moral qualities. It converts their unintelligent physical powers into mere machines. It does violence to the

responsible relation of men to God, and invades His prerogative, by prohibiting the exercise of the will in an accountable agent. Its arbitrary power reduces the *equal* to the condition of an abject *inferior*. It ordains the sole supremacy of the will of the enslaver, with which no other will may interfere. It leaves his selfish passion uncontrolled. It destroys all sense of reciprocal obligation. It denudes the victim of the rights of man, for it removes him from the distinguishing rank of man. It proclaims that he can suffer no wrong, for he can possess no right.

The demand of exorbitant labour permits no equitable return. The labourer is *not* worthy of his hire. The master commands the sole advantage, the slave can have none, from his ceaseless toil. The stimulant of coercive violence is substituted for that of personal interest and lawful wages. When tasked beyond his strength, when exhausted and dispirited, the slave finds no vestige of a sense of justice to which he can appeal. He has no rights to claim.

Hence, also, that recklessness of human life, by which the system has ever been disgraced. It is unchecked by considerations of humanity or equity, and is counteracted only by mercenary calculations. The shortening or lengthening of slave life, is in proportion to the severity or leniency with which the system is worked. This is regulated by nicely adjusted estimates of the profit which, in either alternative, is likely to be realized. The slave is the helpless engine by which that profit is to be secured. He can appeal to none. He has no right to his own life.

The first step, then, in the progress of the system tends to the destruction of the sense of justice. None can become implicated in it, without receiving the taint. None can pursue it, without that moral injury to themselves, which ever results from the oft repeated violation of human rights, and of the principles of Divine equity.

2. Moreover, the system of slavery sets at defiance the sympathies of humanity. The position in which the slave is placed, removes him from the exercise of those affections that constitute the beauty and glory of human nature, and that mitigate the ills to which flesh is heir. He is refused the place—he is robbed of the properties of a man. Intellectual and spiritual excellence is denied him. He is declared to possess nothing that can harmonize with benevolent emotions or sanctifying graces. As though the power of love could find no entrance into his breast, he is abandoned to that of coercion and terror. The bonds of the great brotherhood of the family of earth are snapped asunder. The spirit of tyranny rises to the throne, and banishes “peace and good-will.” It gathers strength from its exercise, and increases its appetite with the increase of its prey. Tenderness of spirit gives way to ferocity. Humanity shudders at the transformation.

The helpless infant is left to pine and perish ; or only reared that it may be torn away, as a thing of merchandize, from its mother's breast. The modesty and innocence of woman are no defence ; but are recklessly outraged, as a valueless possession to the slave. The most sacred bonds of family and connubial relation and happiness are annihilated, to gratify the lust of the impure. With the fruits of infamy, the markets of human flesh are glutted. The wages of unrighteousness are gathered from lawless and licentious passion.

The virgin in her chastity,—the mother in her agony,—the weak in their debility,—the aged in their decrepitude,—the dying in their extremity, find the door of the heart barred against them. Despoiled of their title to humanity, they share none of its emotions or sympathies. They must endure unpitied the vengeance they have not deserved.

To yield to the moral influence of this system is to defile the source of purity, to freeze up the fountains of benevolence.

3. Nor is the system less antagonist to the sacred influences

and claims of religion. It repudiates the second table of the ancient law, which is comprehended in these words;—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It provides an agency for the violation of the law of Christ; "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." It stands in direct opposition to the great end of the moral government of God, and that universal love which he sent his Son to teach, and which he gives his Holy Spirit to promote.

Like the pestilence walking in darkness, this system of iniquity stealthily, but effectually, diffuses its poison through the entire constitution of society. It fosters impurity and violence. It endangers personal security and social order. The ferocity of slave-holders to each other,—the unchasteness of mind and conversation from which their wives and daughters are not free,—the daring and indiscriminating attacks on life, which, while they issue fatally, are tolerated in silence, present a picture of appalling colours. The Right Rev. B. B. Smith, bishop of the Episcopal diocese of Kentucky, in allusion to this fierce and dangerous spirit, says, "The victims are not always by any means the most worthless of our population. It too often happens that the enlightened citizen, the elevated lawyer, the affectionate husband, and precious father, are thus instantaneously taken from their useful stations on earth, and hurried, unprepared, to their final account. * * What can have brought about and perpetuated this shocking state of things?" The bishop subsequently refers to a prevailing cause, as existing in the system of slavery; "Are not some of the indirect influences of a system, the existence of which amongst us can never be sufficiently deplored, discoverable in these affrays? Are not our young men more heady, violent, and imperious, in consequence of their early habits of command? Are not our taverns and other public places of resort much more crowded with an inflammable material, than *if young men were brought up in the staid and frugal habits*

of those, who are constrained to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow."

4. The baneful influence of the system is exerted upon the characters of professing Christians, as well as upon those who fear not God. It can only be adopted at the expense of the fundamental principles of the Gospel. It is as the letting out of water, swelling into a torrent, and bearing away every barrier, till it overspreads and defiles every heart with its turbulent and polluted tide. Christian professors become its apologists; they drink into its spirit; they fall into its snares; they partake its sins. That power of delusion must be gigantic which stifles within their breasts convictions of solemn and imperative duty, and which blinds them to the mischiefs and injustice they perpetuate. That mystery of iniquity must be fearful which allures to its defence, the ministers of peace and mercy; while it stops their lips from remonstrating with the guilty, and puts into their hands the weapons of the cruel.

The toleration of slavery in connexion with the Church, is a daring and flagrant insult to the Prince of Peace, who is ordained to "break every yoke." Its practice by professing Christians is a deliberate contravention of the design of His truth, which maketh "free indeed."

II.—The moral influence of the system on the character of the slave is injurious to the last degree.

1. It denies him the nature and the rights of man, without possessing the power so to embrate him, as to destroy the consciousness that he is a man. Hence, he more sensitively feels his degradation. It prostrates him in the dust, and forbids him to rise. He finds that he has no power to ameliorate his condition, that no effort can rescue him from his squalid wretchedness and subjection. In the midst of ceaseless struggles for human liberties he can take no share. Every right of a citizen and a free agent is unconditionally, and perpetually, torn

from him. The quickness of his perception, the indestructibility of his consciousness of right, render him the more reckless; till, abandoning himself to despair, and becoming as wicked as he has been made abject, he outrages, in himself, the dignity of his noble nature.

2. The system of slavery cramps all that is expansive in the intellect, and generous in the heart. It removes all incentive to improvement. It denies the slave the right to amend even his physical condition, as it prevents his possession of property. It prohibits the culture of mind, and, to the utmost of its power, the exercise of independent thought. It dooms him to mental bondage and darkness, and declares the penalty of the law against his instructor. He feels that he has powers that he must not employ,—resources that he must not use,—a principle within him that he must not develop. He sinks under the pressure of the system, until it makes him as ignoble as it declares him to be.

3. In a condition so dark and oppressive, shut out from the knowledge of rectitude and the protection of law, the sense of moral right is destroyed within the slave. Without law he becomes lawless. Plundered of his right of property in himself, he apprehends no wrong in plundering a portion of his master's accidental property around him. Reared in the midst of deception and fraud, he knows neither the sanctions of truth nor the iniquity of a lie. Taxed in his toil, stinted in his food, defrauded of his hire, he perceives no dishonesty in withholding his labour, and, by stealth, supplying the cravings of nature. There is no sense of justice to impel him to his work. He is moved only by fear, which hath torment. The cruelties he endures goad him to desperation. The turbulence to which he is driven finds no restraint in any conviction of moral obligation; for this he is not instructed to regard.

4. Hence it reduces him to the dominion of restless, unrestrained, unguided passion. His mind is uninstructed, his

conscience seared, his judgment prostrated, his emotions perverted. He wants but the opportunity to gratify that which can only be repressed by force. He knows of nothing wrong in giving way to the lower appetites, when that restraint is removed. He has no higher ambition. The patterns of lust with which he is familiar, in his educated and polite superiors, he is not slow to imitate. Opportunities, incentives, and provocatives are ever at hand. The honour of man, the delicacy of woman, alike yield to brutal sensuality. Their promiscuous lodging, their defective clothing, the denial of marriage, destroy every feeling of propriety. In the race of mixed colour they see a living apology for their passion. The licentiousness of the master excuses and fosters the licentiousness of the slave. The only true corrective is withheld, because it is the charter of his liberties. The truth that sanctifies, he is not permitted to read, because "the truth maketh free."

The slave feels that his labour is a degradation. On this account the white population despise it. The only motives to which he is open are those of force and fear; and the terms by which he and his toil are designated are terms of indignity. His familiarity with them augments the bitterness of his sufferings, destroys his self-respect, exasperates him to madness, or sinks him in stubborn indifference.

5. The system of slavery robs him of the proper benefit of religion. He is not to receive its full proclamation; it announces liberty to the captives. He is not to feel its motives; it destroys slavish fear, and implants the constraining influence of love. He is not to breathe its spirit; it is the spirit of glorious liberty to the children of God. He is not to learn its fundamental law; it is the law of moral and spiritual equality, of universal and reciprocal charity. This anti-christian system deprives him of the peace, the hope, and the joy, of which godliness hath the promise in this life. It suffers him not to read the wonderful truths of God. It refuses the

key of knowledge. It presents him with a mutilated gospel, a defective religion. In him, therefore, it does violence to God's means of grace, weakens the energy of the spiritual life, stunts the growth of the immortal nature, and impairs the beauty of the Divine image in his soul.

III.—A system so founded in injustice, so reared in irreligion, so consummated in enormity, opposes a fearful barrier to the progress of civilization, education, and christianity. In every operation on the character of the enslaver and the enslaved, it accelerates the downward movement of depravity and misery.

The Christian church is brought to the conviction, that only in the diffusion of the blessings of education and religion, will true civilization advance. These are, by the system of slavery, withheld. To retain the slave as a chattel, a mere animated machine, the intelligent principle within him must be crippled, and fettered. It can never be destroyed. Hence the restrictions on means of instruction, and the penal sanctions by which they are enforced. Above all, the spirit of christianity is restrained. Slavery decrees that the word of the Lord shall *not* have free course. The two cannot walk through the land together, for they are not agreed. If the gospel be triumphant, slavery must fall. That slavery may continue in despotic might, the truth of God must be bound. They are diametrically and unalterably opposed. Slavery consorts with the demon of pollution; the gospel breathes the spirit of purity. Slavery seeks an asylum in the thick darkness; the gospel is the emanation of pure and heavenly light. Slavery denies to man the prerogatives of reason and conscience; the gospel illuminates his mind, purifies the conscience, and sets it free. Slavery debases and curses his being; the gospel ennobles and blesses him with a renewed and celestial nature. Slavery plunges him into unmitigated distress and despair; the gospel elevates him to joy and hope. Slavery draws a veil over

the revelation of life and immortality ; the gospel confers the free and glorious title to the life everlasting.

The outbreaks of the evil genius of the system, have ever been characterised by unrelenting animosity to the religion of Jesus. It has razed the christian sanctuary. It has committed to the flames the oracles of God. It has satiated its fury with the blood of the saints. To gather the broken in heart to the ministry of consolation, is rebellion against its majesty : to announce the opening of the prison to them that are bound, is to move the wretched captives to sedition : to read the messages of sovereign grace, is to utter treason against its state.

The question, which the church of Christ has to determine, is, whether the gospel shall be hidden, or this monster tyrant be overthrown. To its determination she must proceed. Considerations of policy and expediency must be banished from her counsels, when high and sacred duty summons her to action. The testimony of her solemn assemblies must go forth, the remonstrance of her consecrated ministers must be heard abroad. Her silence must be broken : the trumpet of battle must be sounded against the abomination, which retains the uncivilized in their degradation, in the midst of the enlightened and the free ; which endangers the peace, the stability, the prosperity, the happiness of mighty nations ; which resists the progress of the heralds of salvation ; which hinders the descent of Divine benediction ; which is twice accursed, which curseth in time and in eternity, both him that enslaves, and him that is enslaved.